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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 29 January 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions of the Member States of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to note C013/2007 in which the Permanent Mission of Uruguay presented its candidacy for re-election to the Human Rights Council in the elections that will be held during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, in May 2009.

Uruguay wishes to reiterate its full support for the Human Rights Council, a body created for the purpose of strengthening the United Nations system for the promotion, respect and protection of human rights.

The effective exercise of human rights and their enjoyment by all the people remains a central concern and a priority for the Uruguayan State. In our country, the essential elements for the defence of the highest standards in the promotion, respect and protection of human rights have been enshrined in the National Constitution and have also been regulated by law since 1825.

During the past three years, new and important advances have been made in human rights legislation, specifically the creation of the Honorary Commission against Racism, Xenophobia and all other forms of Discrimination; the adoption of the law on cooperation with the International Criminal Court with respect to combating genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (establishing universal jurisdiction); adoption of the Refugee Statute; the amendment of the National Children and Adolescents' Code, with the inclusion of the prohibition of corporal punishment for minors; adoption of the act on equal rights and opportunities for men and women; adoption of the act on migration and the criminalization of the crimes of trafficking in persons.

The delegation of Uruguay, which, like many other delegations, played a very active role in the negotiating process that culminated in the establishment of the

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Human Rights Council, supported the inclusion of "voluntary pledges and commitments" by candidates for membership in the Council, on the understanding that it was a means to encourage international commitments in that area on a voluntary basis.

In keeping with a principle of such importance, the Government of Uruguay, as it once again submits its candidacy to the Human Rights Council, wishes to update its voluntary pledges and contributions to protect and promote human rights made in 2006:

Ratification of or accession to new international human rights instruments

In fulfilment of its pledge to ratify or accede to new international human rights instruments, the Government of Uruguay ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (Act No. 18.056), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Act No. 18.418) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Act No. 18.420).

Uruguay has also ratified regional human rights instruments, such as the MERCOSUR Protocol on the Commitment to the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and regional conventions on migration, terrorism and the rights of youth.

Uruguay reaffirms its pledge to ratify or accede to new international human rights instruments, encouraging ratification by parliament of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Cooperation with the Human Rights Council

As part of the responsibilities it assumed upon becoming a member of the body, Uruguay pledges to continue to cooperate fully with the Council to give priority to human rights questions within the United Nations system.

Promotion of a spirit of cooperation and genuine dialogue to ensure an operational focus on cooperation and prevention, avoiding protection of violators of anyone's human rights, at any time, in any situation and in any region.

Substantive interaction with special procedures and mechanisms

Continuing the standing invitation to the special thematic procedures to visit the country and the pledge to collaborate fully with those procedures and to ensure that it remains open to international scrutiny

The visit of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak, is planned for late March 2009.

Preparation of reports for treaty bodies

After the report for the universal periodic review, in 2009 Uruguay will prepare, with a view to their forthcoming submission, the reports for the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as to the Committee on the Rights of the Child

on the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Collaboration to ensure that all human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, receive equal treatment, on the understanding that human rights cannot be attained fully without ensuring sustainable human development based on equity and social justice.

Promotion of the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity as pillars of the Council's work

Relationship with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Uruguay will continue to cooperate closely with OHCHR in the fulfilment of its mandate, with the aim of helping it to address the wide range of human rights issues facing the international community.

On 24 December 2008, Act No. 18.446 was promulgated to create a National Human Rights Institution, having received the support of the Office in the design and approval process.

Full support for the effective participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the Human Rights Council, recognizing its fundamental role in the human rights system.

In addition to that pledge, the Government of Uruguay has included civil society in the preparation of reports for monitoring bodies, and in the follow-up of their recommendations.

New York, 29 January 2009